Date:

To: Provost Holz

From: Mines Faculty Senate

RE: Recommendations for formalizing faculty participation in Interdisciplinary Degree Programs

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*The importance of strong faculty participation in Interdisciplinary Programs:*

Mines is making a strong push toward interdisciplinary education and research as part of the Mines@150 strategic plan. Mines@150 sets a goal of 20% of undergraduate students earning degrees in interdisciplinary undergraduate programs (IDUPs). Currently, ~30% of Mines graduate students are in interdisciplinary graduate programs (IDGPs). In the past 6 years the number of IDGPs on campus has grown from 4 to 17, with more in consideration across campus. Mines Faculty Senate recently approved the first IDUP after lengthy debate about the resources needed to support IDUPs and faculty participation in IDUPs. That discussion clearly indicated the need for formalizing faculty participation in Interdisciplinary Degree Programs (IDPs). It is also becoming increasingly common for faculty hires to be interdisciplinary and driven by proposals for faculty searches from IDPs.

To ensure the viability and health of IDPs, Mines needs to ensure that faculty participation in the Interdisciplinary Degree Programs is consistent and stable. However, to date there is no consistent approach to hiring, evaluating, or promoting faculty who are the foundation of the IDPs. Faculty who support the IDPs do so at the willingness of their Department Heads or take on teaching and service overloads without extra compensation. A change in Department Head often leaves faculty participating in IDPs vulnerable; and faculty can be left feeling that their participation is not valued. A change in Department Head can even restrict faculty participation in IDPs, leaving gaps in the approved IDP curriculum. Faculty participation in IDPs is also not clearly or consistently evaluated in the annual performance evaluation and promotion and tenure processes. These factors make it increasingly hard for faculty to support IDPs and significantly hinder the ability of the IDP Program Directors to manage the IDPs to meet the Mines@150 goals.

While the long-term health of the Mines IDPs will involve many factors, the Mines Faculty Senate believes that formalizing faculty participation in the Interdisciplinary Degree Programs is an important first step.

*Senate recommendations for formalizing faculty participation in Interdisciplinary Programs:*

To support IDPs and the faculty who participate in those programs, we recommend defining faculty participation roles and implementing contractual agreements for faculty whose participation is required for an IDP to be a viable program. This approach will clearly define faculty commitments outside of the department, which will allow Departments to understand those commitments and provide incentive for faculty participation by ensuring that their contributions to the IDP are valued as a part of their official job description. This approach will also provide a clear picture of resource allocation and needs across campus by transparently allocating faculty responsibilities in IDPs and Departments.

In order to put documentation in place that defines faculty participation in IDPs, a definition of IDP Faculty is needed. We propose the following definitions to distinguish between faculty that participate in IDPs in one of three roles:

1. IDP Program Director – The faculty member responsible for the oversight and management of all aspects of an IDP. The responsibilities and compensation of the Program Director should be established in a contractual agreement negotiated with Academic Affairs and the Program Director’s Department Head. Compensation could include a 1/9 salary boost, summer salary, teaching relief, or a combination thereof.
2. IDP Core Faculty - Faculty whose participation in, and support of, the IDP is necessary for the long-term health and stability of the IDP. These faculty are either hired through an IDP search or move into those positions through a negotiated process. These faculty should have a contractual agreement that defines the appointment and expectations for the IDP Faculty member, for example, to teach courses and advise students in the IDP. The identification of IDP Core Faculty should be negotiated between the Faculty member, the IDP Program Director, the appropriate Department Head, and Academic Affairs, in accordance with the particular IDP’s bylaws.
3. IDP Affiliate Faculty - Those who participate in an IDP (teaching, advising, administration) without a contractual agreement for course delivery or service in an IDP. Teaching, service, and/or participation in the IDP is not required and not contractually obligated. Participation can be negotiated with a Faculty member’s DH/DD and/or participation can function as a service commitment.

The Faculty Senate recommends that formal agreements be put in place for all newly hired IDP Program Directors and Core Faculty, as defined above. The agreements should be identified and formalized as part of the hiring process. We also recommend a review to identify current faculty members who are serving in an IDP Program Director or Core Faculty role so that formal agreements can be put in place for those faculty. This review should involve the IDP Program Directors, the appropriate Department Heads, and Academic Affairs. We recommend that these agreements be reviewed and, if necessary, updated, on a periodic basis.

The formal agreement should, at a minimum, include the following:

1. The percentage of faculty appointment that is in the IDP as it relates to teaching and service.
2. How the faculty appointment will be handled in the case that the IDP ceases to exist.

The following items should also be considered when establishing the formal agreements for IDP Faculty, but may not apply in all cases:

1. Is the home Department or the IDP responsible for providing administrative support, office space, laboratory space and/or laboratory access for the IDP Faculty member?
2. Is the home Department or the IDP responsible for providing administrative support and/or office space for students enrolled in the IDP and advised by the IDP Faculty member?
3. Will there be expectations (publication requirements, seminar attendance, thesis procedures, service requirements, etc.) imposed by the home Department on students enrolled in the IDP and advised by the IDP Faculty member?
4. Will departmental resources (funding, travel grants, recruiting fellowships, etc.) be available to support students enrolled in the IDP and advised by the IDP Faculty member?

Program duties which would be assigned to a program assistant in a department should not fall to the Program Director, and the agreement should spell out who will provide this assistance. Both compensation and administrative support need to be provided in proportion to the work required of the Program Director. This is not always proportional to the number of students in the program. For example, a program in its first year, or a program undergoing significant revision will incur a significant amount of work for the Program Director and Core Faculty regardless of the program’s size.

Additionally, Faculty Senate believes that the Mines Guidance Documents (Faculty Handbook, Policies & Procedures Manual, et al) need to be updated to consider the following topics as they relate to all faculty, with specific guidance related to IDPs:

1. Formal inclusion of contributions to IDPs in annual evaluations and Promotion and Tenure packages, for both IDP Faculty and IDP Affiliate Faculty.
2. Procedures for establishing and terminating formal appointments with IDPs.
3. Expectations for providing administrative support, office space, laboratory space, and laboratory access for all faculty and their students.
4. Campus wide expectations for items I-IV above, if a uniform campus approach is needed.